

Socio-Cultural Awareness Of Food Security Needs And Causes Of Global Hunger Among Women In South- East, Nigeria

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the awareness of food security needs and causes of global hunger in South - East, Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study was 1,271 registered members of women community based organizations in South- East, Nigeria. A sample of 571 registered members was drawn using Multi-Stage sampling. The instruments for data collection were a 16-item researcher-developed questionnaire, titled "Awareness of Food Security Needs and Causes of Global Hunger Questionnaire (AFSNCGHQ) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions, while t-test statistics was used to test the two null-hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings based on the research questions, among others, indicated that: Women are aware of food security needs in South - East, Nigeria to a high extent and that the causes of global hunger in South - East, Nigeria include high rate of population growth, prevalence of natural disasters such as flood, drought and climate change, inadequate provision of educational facilities for farmers to upgrade their skills for productive growth. Findings based on the test of null hypotheses revealed that: there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of the literate and non-literate women on the extent to which they are aware of food security needs and causes of global hunger in South - East, Nigeria. The following recommendations were made ;consistent and adequate effort should be made towards educating non-literate women on food security needs, especially on the prevalence of malnourishment in the communities ; adequate provision of educational facilities should be made available to farmers in order to upgrade their skills for productive growth and other ways of overcoming global hunger.

Keywords: Awareness, Food, Food Security Needs, Global Hunger.

Introduction

Awareness of food security needs has currently become topical not only in Nigeria but globally .There are huge voices of people in the world crying of food scarcity .Food is very important for human existence and not supposed to be inadequate in supply. Thus, study on awareness of food security needs will help women in rural communities as the most vulnerable to global hunger to be informed on the outcome of insufficient food production. The problem remains whether women in rural communities are knowledgeable or conscious of the implications of global food

scarcity. The significance of food to the entire body system and its function is not in doubt because insufficient intake of food can cause a large number of people in the world to suffer from micro nutrient deficiencies; that is, vitamin deficiencies. Prevalence of micro nutrient deficiencies are manifestations of global hunger.

Global hunger is an epidemic in Nigeria. Hunger can be described as inability of a large number of poor people to have access to food. However, Tverberg defined "global hunger as when the food scarcity is extended to the whole countries of the world" ¹. Tverberg described food insecurity as a major global concern as billions of people are suffering from starvation, under nutrition and malnutrition. In the view of Olayiwola, Tashikalma and Giroh, many families were not ignorant of the increasing rate of begging, high cost of food stuffs, high rate of hunger and the high prevalence of malnourishment in Oluyole Local Government Area of Oyo State ². The number of people who are hungry or go to bed every day without food is on the increase. Thus, Food and Agricultural Organization Report (FAO) indicated that the number of hungry people who were chronically unable to afford adequate diet are higher than the estimated 71% of Nigerians who are underfed ³. World hunger statistics show that about 815 million people of the 7.6 billion people in the world or 10% were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2000 – 2017 ³, the same organizational report indicated that almost all the hungry people in the world live in lower – middle income countries. Adding that the prevalence of undernourishment is highest in Africa and that the absolute number of undernourished people is largest in Asia ³.

To demonstrate that hunger is a global issue, international communities adopted eight (8) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which guided global development efforts in the years 2000-2015 (UNDP Report). To sustain the progress made in attainment of MDGs, countries of the world, in 2015 adopted a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Each of the 17 goals has specific target to achieve in 15 years' time. Consequently, SDG 2 which aims at ending hunger by the year 2030, is the crux of this present study which is zero hunger, achieve food security, improved malnutrition and promote sustainable agriculture ⁴.

In order to join in the movement of ending hunger by 2030, this study became pertinent. The study was carried out in South- East, Nigeria made up of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. This study identified the extent to which educational activities of women have made them informed of what is happening in their environment concerning the prevalence of malnutrition, starvation and under-nutrition among community members due to food deficiencies. In other words, how women's active involvement in education / training have awakened their consciousness, make them more knowledgeable and informed about threats posed by food scarcity and poor financial situation associated with it on the lives of community members. Davis observed that women awareness of food security needs will stimulate their actions to wedge war against the causes of global hunger ⁵. It is imperative to reposition women by involving them in meaningful development activities in their various localities instead of paralyzing their efforts. Davis submits that for the goal of zero hunger to be achieved everybody needs to play vital roles including individuals, governments, private sectors, community leaders, civil society and organizational heads ⁵.

To end hunger requires a democratic process where all the sectors of the economy will go into agricultural production. A collective move to sustainable agriculture by all the sectors of the economy is imperative. A change of the global food and agricultural system is required if today's 795 million people who are hungry and the projected two (2) billion people by 2050 are to be nourished ⁶. There must be a rethink on the method of growing, producing, sharing and consuming food according to Food ¹. Tverber further suggested that if the above is done right, agriculture, forestry and fisheries can provide nutritious food for all and generate decent income for the future fight against global hunger. Thus, Asian Development Bank Report indicated that building a case for more public support requires a holistic approach, stakeholders and duty bearers need to go into agricultural production sector to overcome hunger ⁷. This can be achieved by investing in agriculture. Agriculture is the largest employer in the world, providing livelihood for 40 percent of today's global population. It is also the largest source of income and jobs for poor rural households and needs to be improved. World Bank indicated that when demand for food outstrips supply, the result is always manifestation of hunger ⁸.

Hunger in the South East, Nigeria is associated with inadequate employment opportunities⁹. The irony of the situation is that many are educated, (including women and youths) but have no job. This type of hunger according to Fan and Polman¹⁰ is connected with income, and the recent economic recession. The country's crippling economic crisis has resulted to high unemployment rate, poverty, high cost of residential houses, and payment of half salaries to workers, low wages and zero allocations. There is increase in the number of families that are food insecure or living in constant fear of not being able to feed their family members⁹. However, due to increase in unemployment and poverty in the rural areas of South East, people are suffering from multiple hardships. When there is food crisis as it is now in Nigeria, women are not usually at rest because women and children are more vulnerable to the consequences of hunger¹¹. Women in South- East states are noted for their interest in agriculture and business but a lot of them are non-literate to the point that they avoid having any transaction with the bank due to their inability to read and write. Lack of education, information and training is a key limiting factor to the development of women in agriculture¹². In spite of all the pangs of hunger, women have made deliberate efforts individually and collectively as organizations to achieve food security but their efforts are still not sufficient.

It is expected that farmers' organizations and the private sectors will take the lead towards increased extension training activities, internet connectivity, technical and market information provision. Regrettably, the present level of contribution by farmers' organization and private sector in these areas of internet connectivity, technical and market information provision is still very low compared to that of Japan and Mexico¹². Women in agricultural cooperative societies and other functional associations are still dependent on their husbands for farm related information. This attitude of women showed lack of decision making power. This is a threat to food security.

In order to cope with hunger, majority of women in the South-East concentrated more on food processing and other cottage industries¹³. Food processing and storage according to Idachaba has helped to reduce waste in case of excess in agricultural production¹⁴. Food processing can be achieved using combination of operations such as sorting, cleaning, size reduction, extraction, mixing, heating or sun drying, cooling, packaging, refrigerating/freezing and storage. Idachaba further stated that majority of women in the rural and urban communities in the South-East are into processing of both fleshy food and dried ones such as meat and fish, roots and tubers, etc. A lot of activities involved in food processing require patience and women initiatives as strategies against hunger.

However, hunger could be caused by different phenomena in different places. What could cause hunger in North- Eastern Nigeria may be different from what could cause hunger in SouthEast- Nigeria. Davies posited that hunger has many causes such as climate change, poverty, unemployment, wars, poor harvesting practices, food wastage, rural-urban migration, environmental degradation and famine, to mention but a few¹⁵. In support of Davies, Zero Hunger challenge report¹⁶ revealed that right now in the world, climate change is putting even more pressure on the resources people depend on, thereby increasing risks associated with disasters such as droughts and floods. In addition, certain weather shifting patterns that are not friendly to Agriculture and food security are prevalent in Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo States. Mwaniki¹⁷ observed that women in the South East have much work to be done in their environment. The women are expected to avoid littering of their environment with waste materials such as refuse dumps. They deserve environmental education, which will help them refrain from poor environmental management. They have to be careful with their environment to avoid being victims to global hunger¹⁸.

Similarly, Wars and conflicts in so many countries of the world can lead to food crisis. To support the above assertion, Barrett and Lentz revealed that causes of food insecurity include unstable social political environments, wars and civil strifes, imbalances in trade, natural resource constraints, gender inequality, inadequate education, poor health, natural disasters and the absence of good governance¹⁹. Alonge²⁰ stated that clashes between farmers and herdsmen have resulted in drastic reduction in farm outputs. Farmers in the affected areas have abandoned farms for fear of being attacked by the herdsmen. For example, the attack of Fulani Herdsmen in Uzo-Uwani in Enugu State and Aba in Abia State instilled fears into the farmers and stopped the women in such areas from going to farm so that they will not be killed or harassed by the Fulani people²¹. The prices of rice and garri hiked because food supply was reduced. World Bank submitted that hunger is caused by failure of peoples' entitlements, this means that when people are denied what they are entitled to such as income, it can result to hunger⁸. Furthermore World Bank⁸ stated

that hunger can be induced by deprivation as it is with women in agricultural production and income generating activities. A person may have little means of commanding food if he/she has no job, no other sources of income and no social security. This type of hunger can coexist with plentiful supply of food in the economy and the market.

Poor agricultural funding is a factor that retards the growth of food security in Nigeria and needs to be re-addressed ²². Nigeria has been paying lip services to research and technology development. Hazell and Haddad ²³ posited that in Nigeria, compared to the International recommendation that agricultural research spending should not be less than 2% of agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Nigeria governments funding of agricultural research has been well below the average for Africa as a whole (0.85 percent of GDP). The Department of Agricultural Sciences (DAS) of the Federal Ministry of agriculture is responsible for all aspects of agricultural research in Nigeria. DAS oversees the funding and management of 15 National Agricultural Research Institutes located throughout the country and funding has been generally sluggish. Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development ²⁴ made it clear that Federal Government budget on Agriculture has been in regression since the collapse of oil prices in the early 1980s.

In other words, increase in rural-urban migration is playing a key role in the emerging food crisis. According to Global Hungre Index ⁶ projection by 2050, 70 percent of the world population is expected to be living in cities. By this, agricultural production will be negatively affected. This is a common characteristic of the South East youths that leads to hunger. In the South- East Nigeria hunger is taking a new dimension in the rural communities where Agriculture is their mainstay. Youths and the active poor are migrating to the urban areas where social amenities are available and white color jobs exist. The rural areas are starved of manpower. Farmlands are lying waste due to lack of labour. Thousands of people, mostly women and girls face a life of hunger and misery. Ogazi ,Uzundu, Orame , Okoye and Igbokwe ²⁵ confirmed that seventy percent (70%) of the population in the South East of Nigeria live on less than one hundred Naira (₦100.00) per day That some households could afford only one cooked meal in a day and cannot provide enough food for their household needs often. Ogazi ²⁵ observed that children are going to bed without eating due to lack of money.

In the circumstance, Ogazi ²⁵ further said that hunger situation in the South- East States is caused by unemployment, economic recession, weak supply of food, increase in population rate, food export to cities, over dependency on traditional agricultural practices, cultural norms that deny women access to land and property. It is further observed that other causes of hunger in the South- East States include high cost of food items at the community markets, over dependency on rain fed agriculture, soil erosion, fear of herdsmen attack in the farms and gender inequality. The above affect food supply and made hunger in South- East Nigeria more severe. Women as small holder farmers group can mobilize other women to actively participate in activities that will enhance access to nutritionally adequate and safe food for a healthy and active life to all people at all times. This can be achieved through education, empowerment of women and through eradication of economic, social, political and cultural constraints that affect food production.

Population growth whether increased or decreased affects food security either negatively or positively. Glaring increase in population without commensurable increase in agricultural production leads to food insufficiency. According to Nwajiuba ²⁶, Nigeria will face a looming food security crisis with a growing population that is increasingly dependent on imported food. Nigeria food security challenges will grow with its population when it is projected that Nigeria will be the world's 3rd most populated country in 2050 after India and China, outstripping the USA. As at 2013, Nigeria estimated population was 170,123,700 million people but the current population of Nigeria as at 16th march 2018 based on United Nations estimates is 194,354,065. Nigerian population is equivalent to 2.57% of the world total population (www.worldometers.info/world.pop/nigeria.pop). According to Aidi, Chisom and Ngwudiobu ²⁷ between 2000 and 2012 Nigeria witnessed an increase of 46,785,900 million people which is equivalent to 37.9% increase. They further stated that some of the reasons for such increase in population are early marriage, religion injection, improved sanitary condition and improved medical facilities. Again, within the period (2000 - 2012), there were absence of war, epidemic and other natural calamities that claim lives of human beings.

Till date, Nigeria has been witnessing continuous increase in population although there is no accurate data on the present population.

Poor investment in Agriculture amounts to food insecurity. A food secure country is the one that enjoys uninterrupted food supply. Unstable leadership in Nigeria with policy somersault has made Nigeria food insecure. Successive government came to the office with different agricultural policies, and the inconsistencies in policies affect agricultural development. Agricultural sector in Nigeria is suffering from poor funding because agricultural budgetary allocation each year continues to go down in percentage²⁸. Most roads in developing countries are not motorable limiting people from investing in agriculture or constructing warehouses for storing their harvested crops. Without these infrastructures, communities will be faced with low income and large quantity of crops will be destroyed. All these limit the productivity and access to food to feed families or sell to earn more income. In fact, research by UN and FAO shows that investment in agriculture is five times more effective in reducing poverty and hunger than investment in any other sector. Agriculture is the single largest employer in the world²⁸. Climate changes affect food security. The rain is less predictable now than past years and this is impacting negatively on agriculture. Presently, acid rain destroys farmers' crops and rain now comes either too early or too late thereby affecting planting seasons which results to food scarcity.

The rate of increase in the number of people suffering from starvation, chronic hunger, malnutrition, diseases and high rate of death in different parts of Nigeria, including the South- East States, due to food insufficiency is obvious. These conditions are prevalent in the life of community members in South-East States most especially among women and children. Worst still, a review of global hunger and food security situations in South- East, Nigeria depicts that if urgent attention is not channeled towards improved agricultural sector, that future consequences may be more severe .It seems that studies have not been carried out on the extent to which women are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria . Therefore the study sought to investigate the awareness of food security needs and causes of global hunger among women in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent to which women are aware of food security needs in South East, Nigeria.
2. Examine the causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria.

The following two research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of women awareness of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria?
2. What are the causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria?

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the literate and non-literate Women on the extent to which they are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of literate and non-literate women on the causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria.

Method

The design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design .The study covered the five states in the South- East, Nigeria, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The population of the study comprised all the 1,271 registered members of Women Community Based Organizations in South East, Nigeria. The sample size for this study comprises 571 registered members of Women Community Based Organizations in Abia and Imo states, the two (2) sampled states of South- East. Multi-stage sampling was used to select the sample for the study. The two states were selected because their farmlands have been affected by oil spillage or oil black sooth as a result of illegal refineries in Ohaji /Egbema area of Imo state and Asa area of Abia state, which has put more stress on the women's economic activities. More so, the rate of kidnapping of women and children is on the increase in the two states which limits women engaging in enterprising activities.

Instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The instrument for the study was a 16- item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, titled “Awareness of Food Security Needs and Causes of Global Hunger among Women Questionnaire” (AFSNCGHWQ). The instruments were subjected to face validity by three experts, two lecturers from the Department of Adult Education & Extra-Mural Studies and one lecturer from Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the Science Education Department, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The researcher requested the experts to help in restructuring the questioner. The experts went through the instruments and made criticisms and modifications which helped in re-structuring the questionnaire. The above corrections were affected by the researcher and incorporated in the final draft of the instrument.

To determine the reliability of the instrument the validated version of the questionnaire was trial-tested on a sample of twenty (20) members of Women Community Based Organizations in Anambra State who were not part of this study but have similar characteristics with the target population. The Cronbach alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency level of the instrument and reliability co-efficient of 0.84 was obtained, which shows that the instrument was reliable.

The researcher employed the service of 10 research assistants for the five states. The research assistants were briefed by the researcher on the method and modalities for administering/collecting the questionnaire to and from the respondents of each of the sampled states during their monthly meeting days. The administration of the instrument was done on the spot and immediately retrieved after responding to the items with the help of research assistants. A total of five hundred and seventy one (571) copies of the questionnaire were administered and returned.

Data collected for this study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions. The researcher used mean score of 2.5 as the criterion mean, in which case, mean scores of 2.5 and above were accepted while the mean scores below 2.5 were rejected. The t-test statistics was used to analyze the null-hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Data from the FGD were qualitatively analyzed.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the extent to which women are aware of Food Security needs in South- East, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Non-Literate= 78		Literate N = 493		Total N = 571		DEC
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
1	Women are aware of food inadequacy in quantity and quality in the area of study.	3.33	0.42	3.48	0.50	3.41	0.50	HE
2	Women are aware that families cannot afford nutritious food for their members.	2.08	1.00	3.01	0.10	2.88	0.49	HE
3	Women are aware that severe hunger is common among the members.	2.92	1.00	3.48	0.58	3.40	0.68	HE
4	Women are aware of the prevalence of malnourishment in the communities.	1.94	0.58	3.13	0.34	2.97	0.56	HE
5	Women are aware of drastic increase in prices of food items in the market.	2.55	0.93	3.51	0.50	3.38	0.66	HE
6	Women are aware of the existence of rampant street begging	3.15	0.83	3.47	0.50	3.43	0.56	HE
7	Women are aware that there is increase in scavenging of refuse dumps for food by some of the citizens.	2.05	0.80	3.46	0.49	3.27	0.73	HE

8	Women are aware that people eat unbalanced meal daily.	2.18	0.38	3.05	0.22	2.94	0.39	HE
9	Women are aware of reduction in food production due to fear of the attack of the herdsmen in the farms.	2.95	0.78	3.43	0.49	3.37	0.56	HE
Cluster Mean		2.57	0.21	3.33	0.18	2.96	0.31	HE

Key: VHE = Very High Extent, HE = High Extent

The result of the study as presented in table 1 shows the mean ratings and standard deviations of the responses of respondents on the extent to which women are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria. The mean ratings are within the range of 2.50-3.49 set as criterion for High Extent. This implies that to a high extent, women are aware of food security needs in South- East Nigeria. However, items 2, 4, 7 and 8 for non-literate respondents had mean ratings within the range of 1.50-2.49 set as criterion for low extent. This implies that to a low extent, the non-literate women are aware that families cannot afford nutritious food for their members, are aware of the prevalence of malnourishment in the communities, are aware that there is increase in scavenging of refuse dumps for food by some of the citizens and women are aware that people eat unbalanced meal daily. The total cluster mean of 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.31 showed that Women are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria to a high extent.

This position was maintained by the focus group discussants. The focus group discussants unanimously agree that there is hunger in the area of study. The women both the literate and non-literate responded positively to the item statements on awareness of food security needs. Based on the focus group discussion, it is obvious that there is hunger in the study area and emphasis on high cost of food items among others.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Causes of Global Hunger in South East, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Non Literate N = 78		Literate N = 493		Total N = 571		DEC
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
10.	High rate of population growth.	3.46	0.50	3.17	0.37	3.21	0.40	A
11.	Prevalence of natural disasters such as Flood, Drought and Climate change.	3.22	0.71	3.47	0.50	3.44	0.54	A
12.	Inadequate provision of educational facilities for farmers to upgrade their skills for productive growth.	1.90	0.67	3.08	0.27	2.92	0.54	A
13.	Insufficient production of food due to poor agricultural development	2.67	0.86	3.06	0.24	3.01	0.41	A
14.	Inadequate provision of storage facilities	2.73	0.78	3.04	0.20	3.00	0.36	A
15.	Lack of information about the availability and access to improved varieties of seedlings.	2.65	0.88	2.97	0.16	2.93	0.37	A
16.	Rural-urban migration of youths due to urbanization.	1.69	0.61	3.03	0.17	2.85	0.53	A
Cluster Mean		2.61	0.24	3.11	0.14	3.05	0.23	A

Key: A = Agree

The result of the study as presented in table 2 shows the mean ratings and standard deviations of the responses of respondents on the causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria. The result of the study showed that the total mean ratings for items 11 –16 are above 2.50 set as criterion for accepting an item. This signifies that the respondents agree to the inclusion of all the items listed out as the causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria. However, items 12 and 16 for the non-literate respondents had mean ratings below 2.50 criterion level, which implies that the non-literate women disagreed on inadequate provision of educational facilities for farmers to upgrade their skills for productive growth and rural-urban migration of youths due to urbanization as causes of global hunger. The total cluster mean of 3.05 with a standard deviation of 0.23 showed that items in Table 2 were causes of global hunger in South- East,

Nigeria. On the causes of global hunger, the focus group discussants had the same opinion on the items in the questionnaire.

HO₁. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the literate and non-literate Women on the extent to which they are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria .Data for further analysis of the above hypothesis is in the table below.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of the Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of the Literate and Non-literate Women on the extent to which they are aware of Food Security Needs in South- East, Nigeria

Items	Non-Literate		Literate		t-cal	df	Sig	Dec
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD				
Cluster Mean	2.62	0.21	3.33	0.18	-30.88	569	0.00	S

Table 3 shows that a cluster t-value of -30.88 with a degree of freedom of 569 and a significant value of 0.00 were obtained. Since the significant value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 set as level of significance, this means that the result is significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of the literate and Non-literate women on the extent to which they are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria.

Table 2: t-test Analysis of the Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of the Literate and Non-literate Women on the Causes of Global Hunger in South- East, Nigeria

Items	Non-Literate		Literate		t-cal	df	Sig	Dec
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD				
Cluster Mean	2.61	0.24	3.11	0.14	-25.55	569	0.00	S

Table 4 shows that a cluster t-value of -25.55 with a degree of freedom of 569 and a significant value of 0.00 were obtained. Since the significant value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 set as level of significance, this means that the result is significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Inference drawn, therefore, is that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of literate and non-literate women on the causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings show that women are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria to a high extent. This implies that both literate and non-literate women were very much aware that there is food inadequacy in quantity and quality in the area of study, families cannot afford nutritious food for their members, severe hunger is common among the members, prevalence of malnourishment in the communities, drastic increase in prices of food items in the market and existence of rampant street begging, among others. Supporting this finding, the focus group discussants also unanimously agreed that there is hunger in the area of study. From the discussion, it was revealed that both the literate and non-literate women responded positively with respect to awareness of food security needs, such as food inadequacy in quantity and quality, that families cannot afford nutritious food for their members, that severe hunger

is common among others. This, therefore, means that there is hunger in the study area, with high cost of food items, among others.

The above finding agreed with that of Olayiwola, Tashikalma and Giroh ² who carried out a study on analysis of food security status and coping strategies among rural households in Oluyole local government area of Oyo state, Nigeria. The findings showed that many families were not ignorant of the increasing rate of begging, high cost of foodstuffs, high rate of hunger and the high prevalence of malnourishment in the area. Perhaps, this is due to the level of hardship, and lack of money and scarcity of food in the areas, which appear to affect different parts of the country. This situation makes the provision of adequate food for family members at all times a big challenge to caregivers and women in particular due to their role in the family. So, the women's awareness of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria is to a high extent.

Furthermore, the finding from the test of hypothesis one as presented in Table 1 revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of the literate and non-literate women on the extent to which they are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria. This means that the mean ratings of the literate women on the extent to which they are aware of food security needs in South- East differs much from that of their non-literate counterparts. This finding is somehow related to the report by Kabear that lack of education, information and training are limiting factors to the development of women in agriculture ¹². Moreover, Davis observed that women's awareness of food security needs will stimulate their actions to wedge war against the causes of global hunger ⁵. By implication, the level of education or literacy attained by women could make them to become adequately informed or aware of the various food security needs for overcoming global hunger to a high extent. For instance, while most of the literate women were aware of the prevalence of malnourishment in the communities, their non-literate counterparts had little or no knowledge about such incidence.

Besides, with the common belief that people who are educated or literate are more inclined to current information on various media, including the internet, it becomes most likely that literate women will differ in their level of awareness on food security needs than their nonliterate counterparts. This could be the reason the finding of this present study shows that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of the literate and non-literate women on the extent to which they are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria .

The findings of the study showed that high rate of population growth, prevalence of natural disasters such as flood, drought and climate change among others in Table 2 are causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria. This shows to an extent that both literate and non-literate women have knowledge of the causes of global hunger. To add credence to this finding, the focus group discussants had the same view about the items such as high rate of population growth, prevalence of natural disasters, and insufficient production of food due to poor agricultural development among others as causes of global hunger.

These findings corroborate with the finding by Ilaboye, Atikpo, Omofuma, Asekame and Umukoro ²⁹ who carried out a study to analyze the causes, effects and way forward to food insecurity and revealed that the causes of food insecurity include unstable social political environments, war and civil strives, imbalances in trade, natural resource constraints, gender inequality, inadequate education, poor health, natural disasters, such as floods locust infestation and the absence of good governance. Similarly, Davies earlier reported that global hunger has many causes such as climate change, poverty, unemployment, wars, poor harvesting practices, food wastage, rural-urban migration, environmental degradation and famine to mention but a few ¹⁵. Another study by Mohammad, Milan and Radmila ³⁰ on rural women and food security in Mymensingh district, found out that household food security was significantly influenced by education of respondent, family size, household income, access to credit, and social participation. The prevalence of these causes is likely to increase the rate of global hunger in South- East of Nigeria in particular and the country as a whole to a high extent.

Findings on hypothesis two as presented in Table 2 revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of literate and non-literate women on the causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria. This means that the perceptions of literate women on the causes of global hunger differed from those of their non-literate

counterparts to a large extent. This could be due to the fact that the level of education attained by people influence the way they look at issues around them. For example, while the literate women had viewed inadequate provision of educational facilities for farmers to upgrade their skills for productive growth and rural-urban migration of youths due to urbanization as causes of global hunger, the non-literate women did not perceive them as causes considering their ratings on the items. So, this may have influenced differences in the level of agreement or disagreement between literate and non-literate women on the causes of global hunger in the area of this study. Maybe, this is why there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of literate and non-literate women on the causes of global hunger in South-East, Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion of findings, it was concluded, among others, that women are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria to a high extent. That there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of the literate and non-literate women on the extent to which they are aware of food security needs in South- East, Nigeria. The study also revealed that the causes of global hunger in South- East of Nigeria include high rate of population growth, prevalence of natural disasters such as flood, drought and climate change, inadequate provision of educational facilities for farmers to upgrade their skills for productive growth, among others. But, there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of literate and non-literate women on the causes of global hunger in South- East, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made according to the findings of the study;

1. Consistent and adequate effort should be made towards sensitizing non-literate women on food security needs especially the prevalence of malnourishment in the communities.
2. Adequate provision of educational facilities should be made for farmers in order to upgrade their skills for increased productivity and other ways of overcoming global hunger.
3. The government should ensure active involvement of both literate and non-literate women in agricultural programmes planning and implementation to enable them contribute their own quota towards food security, and challenges of preventing global hunger in the area.

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